

9-30-03

Myths and Facts for Meteorologists

MYTH	FACT
The Air Quality Index (AQI) is only used to forecast ozone.	The AQI is also used to forecast for particle pollution.
Air pollution is only a concern in the summer.	Particle pollution, unlike ozone, occurs year-round.
Asthma is only a concern during the summer and/ or when playing sports.	Asthma is a lung disease, and people with asthma are susceptible to air pollution year-round.
Air quality only affects us when we are outside.	That's right for ozone. But when particle levels are high outdoors, they can also be high indoors.
There is nothing I can do about air pollution, so I should just ignore it.	People can reduce their exposure to air pollution by simply checking their daily air quality forecast and using it to adjust their strenuous outdoor activities.
Ozone and particle pollution affect the same groups of people.	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children are particularly sensitive to the harmful effects of particle pollution. The sensitive groups for ozone include people with lung disease (but not heart disease), and children and adults who are active outdoors.
The health effects of ozone and particle pollution are the same.	While both ozone and particles have been associated with effects on the lungs, particles have also been associated with effects on the heart and cardiovascular system.
I need to pay attention only to red and purple Air Quality Index levels.	Even when the air quality is forecast to be code orange for ozone or particles, it is unhealthy for people in sensitive groups.
Only long-term exposure to particle pollution causes health problems.	People have experienced health problems from exposure to particles over long periods (years) and from periods as short as 1- to 24-hours.
Air pollution is a health concern only for people with lung disease (including asthma) and older adults.	Others can be affected by air pollution, including people with heart disease, active adults and children. And when the air quality forecast is code red – everyone can be affected.